

REMARKS

I. Status of Claims:

The amendments to the claims should be entered in as much as they require no new search and/or consideration.

The following amendments have been made to the claims:

(i) claims 22, 25, 28, 29, 32, and 42 have been amended to correct some minor informalities;

(ii) claim 22 has been amended with the features of previously pending claim 24, and claim 24 has been cancelled;

(iii) claim 25 has been amended to be independent;

(iv) claim 29 has been amended with the features of previously pending claim 31, and claims 31 and 38 have been cancelled; and

(v) claim 32 has been amended to be independent.

Claims 1-21 remain cancelled. Thus, claims 22-23, 25-30, 32-37, and 39-42 are present for examination.

II. Specification:

The specification has been amended to correct a minor informality.

III. Claim Rejections:

Claims 22, 23, 29 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Hirata (U.S. Patent No. 6,240,423).

Claims 24, 26, 31, 33, 38, and 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirata in view of Hori et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,795,127) (hereinafter Hori).

Claims 25 and 32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirata in view of Official Notice.

Claims 27, 28, 34-37, 41, and 42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirata in view of Delp (U.S. Patent No. 5,949,904).

Claim 39 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirata in view of Official Notice and further in view of Delp.

Claims 24, 31, and 38 have been cancelled.

With respect to claims 22-23, 25-30, 32-37, and 39-42, as amended, the rejections are respectfully traversed.

A. All Claims, as Amended, are Believed to be Rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

The features of previously pending claim 24 have been included in claim 22, and claim 24 has been cancelled. Because claim 22 has been amended to include the features of previously pending claim 24, the rejection of previously pending claim 24 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirata in view of Hori, is assumed to specify the current amended claim 22. Claim 23 depends from claim 22.

The features of previously pending claim 31 have been included in claim 29, and claims 31 and 38 have been cancelled. Because claim 29 has been amended to include the features of previously pending claim 31, the rejection of previously pending claim 31 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirata in view of Hori, is assumed to specify the current amended claim 29. Claim 30 depends from claim 29.

Thus, all of the claims, as amended, are believed to be rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), with the Hirata reference as one of the references in each of the rejections.

B. Verified English Translation of Priority Document

Applicant is submitting herewith a verified English translation of applicant's Japanese priority document number JP 2000-307775. JP 2000-307775 was filed on October 6, 2000.

C. Common Ownership

The present application (U.S. Patent App. No. 09/955,142) and the Hirata reference (U.S. Patent No. 6,240,423) were, at the time the invention of the present application was made, owned by, or subject to an obligation of assignment to, the same organization.

As supporting evidence of common ownership, filed herewith is a declaration by the inventor of the present application and a declaration by an official of the assignee of the present application.

D. Reference Disqualified as Prior Art under 35 U.S.C. 103(c)

Due to the common ownership, the Hirata reference (U.S. Patent No. 6,240,423) is disqualified as prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(c) with respect to the present application for the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

As explained above, all of the claims, as amended, are believed to be rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), with the Hirata reference as one of the references in each of the rejections.

Thus, applicant requests that the rejections of claims 22-23, 25-30, 32-37, and 39-42, as amended, be withdrawn.

Conclusion:

Applicant believes that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

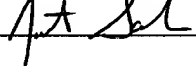
The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-0872. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 50-0872.

If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 50-0872.

Respectfully submitted,

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By 

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